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## SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION IN LOS ANGELES

BY

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## SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION IN LOS ANGELES

BY MARY CHAFFEE, A.M.<sup>1</sup>

**I. Introduction.** Social work is distinctly a profession "in the making"; but it is already taking a place with the other recognized professions. The social worker is rising gradually to a position of respect and influence. In order to add to the information available concerning the new profession, the present study was undertaken. The following list shows the types of social workers employed in Los Angeles.

1. Social settlement workers
2. Housing inspectors
3. Playground directors
4. Juvenile probation officers
5. Adult probation officers
6. Juvenile court officers.
7. Public defenders
8. Public school attendance officers
9. Public health nurses
10. Public health physicians
11. Public employment agency workers
12. Child placing agents
13. Day nursery workers
14. Children's home and orphanage workers
15. Other child welfare workers
16. Maternity home workers
17. Home for the aged workers
18. Outdoor relief agents
19. State, county, city commissioners—labor, charities, immigration, housing, etc.,—generally unpaid
20. Miscellaneous

<sup>1</sup> EDITOR'S NOTE: The author of this monograph received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, with a "major" in Sociology, from the University of Southern California in 1915. In 1915-1916, she studied in the graduate School of Columbia University and in the New York School of Philanthropy, receiving from the first-named institution the degree of Master of Arts in 1916. She served for nearly two years (1916-1918) as the Investigation Agent of the Los Angeles Social Service Commission. This study on "Social Work as a Profession in Los Angeles" was completed in May, 1918.

In making this investigation, the data were secured in many instances by means of personal interviews.<sup>2</sup> The facts concerning the private social agencies were obtained in large part from the files of the Social Service Commission, which were made available for the purpose. Much of the information in regard to the County social service work that centers in the City was obtained through the courtesy of the County Civil Service Commission.<sup>3</sup>

**II. Classification of Data.** The results of this survey are discussed under the following heads: (1) Number and size of social agencies, (2) Number and classification of the workers employed, (3) Comparative salaries, (4) Public versus private agencies, and (5) Standards and qualifications.

(1) *Number and size of social agencies.* Sixty social agencies were included in this survey; twenty-two of these were institutional and thirty-eight were non-institutional. Twenty-four were public agencies (supported by public funds and controlled through public administration) and thirty-six were private agencies (supported and controlled by groups of individuals). Seven of these agencies employ more than twenty social workers each; they are the Outdoor Relief Department of the County Charities, the Juvenile Probation Department, the Public School Dispensary, the City of Los Angeles Health Department, the Nurses Division of the Health Department, and the City Playground Department. Each of the three last-named departments employ more than thirty social workers.

<sup>2</sup>In 1916, the New York School of Philanthropy issued a pamphlet written by Dr. E. T. Devine and Miss Mary Van Kleeck, which gave the results of a study of "Positions in Social Work in New York City." It included data in regard to more than 4000 workers; in certain respects it was used as a model for the present investigation.

<sup>3</sup>There were, of course, many problems concerning the extent and the limitations of this inquiry that had to be decided before the work was actually started. Geographically, the study was limited to the City of Los Angeles; it included, however, all agencies, state, county, or private, maintaining branches or headquarters in the City. No professional or technical workers were included, if their work was not differentiated from that of the other members of the profession who were not connected with a social agency. For example, clerical and secretarial workers were included only when the type of work that was done, demanded or developed a knowledge of social service work.

No organizations or agencies connected with religious or fraternal orders were included. With the exception of the work of the Public School Health Department and of the Department of Compulsory Education and Child Welfare, none of the social work done through the public schools was included.

The average number of persons employed per agency is six. The average for the public agencies is eleven, while that for the private agencies is two and five-tenths.

(2) *Number and classification of workers employed.* In this analysis, four hundred and four social workers were included.\* Table I classifies these workers according to the type of agency by which they are employed.

**TABLE I**  
**Number of Men and Women Workers Employed by the Various Types of Agencies\***

<i>Type of Organization</i>	<i>No. of Men</i>	<i>No. of Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>I. Institutional Agencies</b>			
Institutions for dependent children	3	21	24
Institutions for delinquent children	5	10	15
Homes for the aged	1	6	7
Hospital and maternity homes	1	7	8
Day nurseries	0	7	7
Girls' boarding homes	0	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>II. Non-institutional Agencies</b>			
Relief agencies	4	31	35
Settlements	0	11	11
Public health agencies	54	66	120
Industrial welfare agencies	14	13	27
Recreational agencies	29	26	55
Child welfare agencies	19	18	37
Supervisory agencies	0	3	3
Adult corrections	1	4	5
Juvenile corrections	12	14	26
Legal aid	8	0	8
Miscellaneous	2	12	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>404</b>

\*It is not claimed that this represents the total number of workers employed in Los Angeles, for it is undoubtedly true that some were overlooked. However, it is certain that this figure represents so nearly the total number of professional social workers that the results would not be materially altered by the additions necessary to make the data entirely complete.

Of the four hundred and four workers included, forty-eight are employed only for part time and are therefore eliminated from consideration, except in Table I.

\* Includes part-time workers.

Analysis of this table shows that the agencies dealing with public health employ the largest number of workers, and that non-institutional outrank institutional workers by more than five to one. It is also evident that the number of women employed exceeds the number of men. Out of the total of four hundred and four workers, one hundred fifty-three, or thirty-eight per cent are men, while two hundred fifty-one, or sixty-two per cent are women.

Aside from the classification of workers according to the type of agency by which they are employed, it seemed more significant to classify them in regard to the type of work they are doing in the agency. That is, to segregate all those doing administrative work, those doing medical work, field visiting, etc., in order to gain some idea of the types of work in which they are engaged. For instance, one may be employed by a public health agency, but the mere statement of that fact gives no indication as to whether that person is employed as a doctor, a nurse, a statistician, inspector, etc., and it is obvious that the qualifications needed for these different types of work vary as much as would the qualifications between dissimilar agencies. Table II therefore shows the distribution of the workers in respect to the type of work they are doing in the various agencies.\*

**TABLE II**  
**Distribution of Workers According to Type of Work**

<i>Type of Work</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Field visitors	7	32	39
Probation officers	11	15	26
Playground directors	11	13	24
Investigators and inspectors	26	7	33
Public health physicians	10	7	17
Public health nurses	----	41	41
Legal and judicial officers	9	2	11
Educational and publicity workers	1	12	13
Institutional workers	5	42	47
Office interviewers	7	17	24
Statisticians	2	----	2
Secretaries and clerks	11	12	23
Executive and supervisory officials	24	32	56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>356</b>

\* This method of classification is largely relative and the dividing lines between many of the classes are very indistinct. Also many of the workers must necessarily engage in several types of work.

Table II reveals the fact that the largest group of persons is that engaged in executive and supervisory work. In this group there are twenty-four men and thirty-two women who are employed as heads of departments, division supervisors, etc., who have actual charge in determining policies, carrying out details, etc.

The next largest group is made up of those employed as institutional workers. These are the workers in institutions which have the daily care of the inmates allotted to them. Of the forty-seven persons thus engaged, forty-two are women,—a condition to be expected from the nature of the work. Public health nursing ranks next in number, employing forty-one women.

(3) *Comparative salaries.* In considering the salaries paid to social workers, the question of allowance for maintenance received, was an important one. It was estimated that probably forty dollars per month would not be too large a sum to add to the salaries of those workers who receive room and board as part payment for their services.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, a worker receiving fifty dollars per month and room and board is treated in this study, for comparative purposes, as though receiving ninety dollars per month.

**TABLE III**  
**Classification of Salaries Received**

<i>Salary</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
\$0— 25	----	2	2
25— 50	----	11	11
50— 75	2	39	41
75—100	32	82	114
100—125	34	66	100
125—150	19	12	31
150—175	12	9	21
175—200	9	10	19
200—225	3	1	4
225—250	3	----	3
250—300	6	----	6
300—400	3	----	3
400—500	1	----	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>356</b>

<sup>7</sup> This estimate was approved by the Department of Economics of the University of Southern California.

The average salary paid to social service workers in Los Angeles is \$106.97 per month. The average for men is \$135.35, while women receive an average monthly salary of \$91.82.

In Table III, the incomes received are classified, showing the number of persons receiving specified salaries.

Here we see that the modal, or the most common salary, for men is from \$100 to \$125, while the modal salary for women is one group lower, or from \$75 to \$100. The two groups, ranging from \$75 to \$125, include 229 of the social workers of Los Angeles, or two-thirds of the total number under consideration. The highest salary paid to women is \$200 per month, received by the Referee of the Juvenile Court. Moreover, there are nineteen women receiving from \$153 to \$200 monthly. The highest salary paid to men is received by the Superintendent of County Charities; his salary is \$5000 per year and the use of a residence. Three other men receive salaries of \$300 per month; the Health Commissioner of Los Angeles, the Director of the Public School Health Department, and the Public Defender.

**TABLE IV**  
**Salaries per Month According to Type of Work.**

Type of Work	\$0-50	50-100	100-150	150-200	200-250	250-300	300-400	400-500	Total
Field visitors	3	6	30						39
Probation officers		1	23	2					26
Playground directors	2	1	21						24
Investigators and inspectors		26	6	1					33
Public health physicians				15		2			17
Public health nurses	1	40							41
Legal and judicial officials			1	6	1	2	1		11
Educational and publicity workers		7	5	1					13
Institutional workers		38	9						47
Office interviewers	3	13	7	1					24
Statisticians			2						2
Secretaries and clerks		14	8	1					23
Executive and Supervisory officials	1	15	15	14	6	2	2	1	56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>356</b>

Table IV shows the salaries received by workers of the various types. The average salary received by these workers is shown in Table V.

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**TABLE V**  
**Average Salaries per Month Received in**  
**Different Types of Work**

<i>Type of Work</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Average</i>
Field visitors	\$110	\$ 99	\$101
Probation officers	127	123	125
Playground directors	133	105	117
Investigators and inspectors	80	110	88
Public health physicians	195	175	187
Public health nurses	.....	75	75
Legal and judicial officials	214	175	207
Education and publicity workers	125	100	102
Institutional workers	85	85	85
Office interviewers	111	78	89
Statisticians	132	.....	132
Secretaries and clerks	109	100	104
Executive and supervisory officials	199	115	133

The highest average salary for men is \$214, received by the legal and judicial officials, including the Juvenile Court judges and the public defenders. Next, come the executives with a salary of \$199, and then, the public health physicians who average \$195.

For women, the highest average salary is \$175 per month, received by the women who are engaged in the medical and legal phases of social work. Next are the women probation officers whose salaries average \$128 per month. The lowest average for women is \$75, paid the public health nurses; while for the men, the "inspectors" receive only \$80 monthly salary.

(4) *Public versus private agencies.* In comparing the status of the private agencies and workers with that of the public ones, there are a number of points to be noted. The numbers employed in the various public social enterprises in Los Angeles far surpass those working through private initiative. The numerical comparison of public and private employees is as follows:

**TABLE VI**  
**Employees of Public and Private Agencies**

	<i>Public Agencies</i>		<i>Private Agencies</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Men	110	31%	14	4%
Women	154	43	78	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>26%</b>

Thus, it will be seen that seventy-four per cent of the total number of social workers in Los Angeles are employed in the various public departments. These public agencies number twenty-four in a total of sixty agencies that were surveyed; these twenty-four (forty per cent) employ two hundred and sixty-four workers (seventy-four per cent).

**TABLE VII**  
**Salaries Paid per Month by Public and Private Agencies**

<i>Salary per Mo.</i>	<i>Private Employees</i>			<i>Public Employees</i>		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
\$ 0-50	---	13	13	---	---	---
50-100	5	51	56	29	70	99
100-150	5	9	14	48	69	117
150-200	2	5	7	19	14	33
200-250	---	---	---	6	1	7
250-300	2	---	2	4	---	4
300-400	---	---	---	3	---	3
400-500	---	---	---	1	---	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>264</b>

An analysis of the figures in Table VII shows that the modal salary, or one of greatest frequency, for private workers is from \$50 to \$100, while the largest number of public workers receive from 100 to \$125. This modal average shows a greater disparity than do the mean averages of the two groups.

**TABLE VIII**  
**Average Salaries of Public and Private Workers**

	<i>Average for Public Workers</i>	<i>Average for Private Workers</i>
<b>Men</b> .....	<b>\$135.96</b>	<b>\$129.25</b>
<b>Women</b> .....	<b>100.25</b>	<b>75.20</b>
<b>Men and Women</b> .....	<b>110.82</b>	<b>83.44</b>

(5) *Standards and qualifications.* In considering the question of standardization of requirements for social service workers, it is evident that the necessary qualifications vary so widely that it is difficult to compare them. Some types call for little specialized training,—adaptability and personality being the fundamental re-

quirements. Then there is a large group of social workers, e. g., the public health doctors, lawyers, nurses, etc., who must have the regular technical training of their professions, plus the knowledge of, or personal fitness for, social work. These branches of social work all demand highly standardized and technical training and experience.

Then, there is a large group of workers which must have specialized training, experience, or knowledge of social welfare work, and of the problems connected with their particular branch of work. These are, notably, playground workers, probation officers, field visitors, inspectors and investigators, etc. For these workers the qualifications are being raised gradually; not only is specialized knowledge necessary, but a broad and thorough understanding of the underlying, fundamental social problems is being recognized as necessary.

The value of special college or social service training school training is also being recognized. In examinations given in California by the State and County Civil Service, the preference has been expressed for graduates of colleges or recognized training schools. For example: the latest examination given by the State Board of Charities for Special Agents, required that all candidates must have had three years actual experience in social service or public health work, or be graduates of some college, "majoring" in sociology and social economy, or of a recognized training school for social workers.\*

**III. Conclusions.** In summarizing the results of this study, certain points are clear. While as yet there is little standardization in the social service profession, the standards are being raised and the people are becoming conscious of the fact that trained workers are better than untrained ones. The standards will continue to rise so long as our college and trained school graduates demonstrate to the public the advantages of their training.

\* Civil service is doing much to standardize the requirements for social workers. Aside from educational and general standards, it, of course, provides for certain technical qualifications which must be met, such as age limit, residence in state, city or county, citizenship, etc. These requirements are sometimes waived if there is great difficulty in filling the positions from the field thus limited.

Although few statistical data on the point are at hand, it is obvious that the demand for expert social workers is steadily increasing. This observation is especially true of our public agencies, most of which are seriously hampered by the small number of trained workers which they are allowed to employ. The demand is steadily increasing, as the people develop a socialized public opinion which is urging more adequate provision for meeting our social needs. The history of public social work has just begun; new departments are being organized year by year, which call for social workers trained to meet new social problems.

Salaries, likewise, are slowly increasing; they will continue to do so concomitantly with the crystalizing of the social consciousness in its understanding of the needs of social work. It is slowly becoming clear to the public that the well-trained and well-paid social worker, supplemented by the invaluable aid of the rational and conscientious volunteer worker, is the most economical and useful person to employ. But it is safe to prophesy that it will always be the spirit of service that must be the impelling motive, and that the joy in a good deed socially well done will be the chief reward of the social worker.